

"Our veterans need to feel certain that when the VA collects and stores their information, that data will be as secure as possible. The VA has done a good job of decreasing waste by using electronic records, but those records must be protected. My concern is, while the VA is making arrangements to deal with this incident, what about long term security issues?" asked Farr after the oversight hearing.

Farr questioned VA officials during a Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations subcommittee hearing concerning the VA's request that \$160 million be redirected to cover costs associated with offering one year of credit monitoring to any of the veterans impacted by the data theft. No identity theft due to the breach has been reported so far.

VA officials admitted that today's funding request was focused solely on the problem at hand. They recognized the need for attention to the larger issue of information technology security but offered no details.

"One year ago, we called the VA up to answer questions about a \$1 billion funding shortfall for veterans' health care they had discovered. Today, they're here talking about a personal information breach that the Secretary learned about almost two weeks after the fact and that we learned about from news reports! What's going on at the VA? Everyone on the MilQual-VA subcommittee wants to provide the VA with the money they need to do their job right, but if they're not upfront with us, this system won't work," continued Farr.

Farr has sponsored legislation in the House, H.R. 5588 and H.R. 5455, to require the VA provide one year of no cost credit monitoring and fraud alerts for any affected veterans. The legislation also requires the VA protect sensitive information of veterans and create a permanent ombudsman position charged with assisting veterans who are the victims of a data breach and/or identity theft.

In addition, Farr has posted updated information for veterans and other impacted by this data breach on his web site at <http://www.farr.house.gov/display2.cfm?id=11871&type=News> .